I'm strolling through the land!
I'm strolling through the land, brothers!
These are our lands! I'm strolling through them!
And what comes next is the liberation of Palestine!

Palestinian resistance fighter returns to Palestine by paraglider, 7 October 2023.

port / PORT

Preliminary materials to interrogate
Palestine solidarity action in the 'port of melbourne'
since 7 October 2023

OCTOBER 2024

RECKONING WITH OCCUPIED COUNTRY

As writers of this zine, we first reckon with our own position as occupiers of stolen Aboriginal Land. Settlers, regardless of race, gender, class, sexuality, or politics, all benefit materially from the structure of invasion. We were born on occupied Wiradjuri and Dharawal Country respectively, and the zine was compiled on Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung Country.

We are guided not only in our writing, but our lives, by First Nations resistance to invasion and the long lineage of Blak anticolonial struggle that continues to affront the genocidal project of so-called 'australia'. We are indebted to the 235+ years of truth-telling about the colony that has educated us over our lives. The attempts to eliminate Aboriginal life have failed, and every moment of Blak joy, strength, love, and community is a testament to the eternal reality of Aboriginal Sovereignty.

We refuse to allow acknowledgements as a mere formality, relegated to a position before 'beginning'. To begin is to reckon with an inheritance of genocide, land theft, child abduction, slavery, rape, desecration of country that makes possible our lives on this land. We understand that all struggles here must be founded on the core tenet of Land Back, and we stand as accomplices in this liberatory fight. Fuck the police, fuck the colony, and fuck everything that it stands for.

We pay respect to all Elders. May all the Blak warriors whose lives the colony has cut short Rest in Peace.

Mural painted by Palestinian women in Moukhayam Shatilla, Lebanon, on Nakba Day, 2022.

ONE YEAR ON

A year has now passed since 7 October 2023: a day of resistance against the occupier, a mass breakout, a popular rebellion against the 'iron grip' of the zionist entity. Today, the IOF attempts its fourth invasion of Jabalia camp in the past year, continuing to intensify its genocide. It is still unable to break Jabalia's resistance – where Palestinians rioted in 1987 to spark the First Intifada.

In Naarm, we have seen 52 weeks of rallies, actions, fundraisers, pickets, walkoffs, blockades, smashed windows, speak-outs, petitions, lobbying, and appeals to unions, civil society, the media, the state, the law.
Yet the genocide continues.

"As long as the resistance in Gaza is steadfast, as long as it does not exhaust its capabilities in confrontation, and as long as the Palestinian people endure this enormous pressure, it will certainly break this project."

Ihsan Ataya, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Political Bureau

We must be candid: perhaps nothing we (or 'the movement') has done has significantly interrupted, slowed down or stopped the genocidal onslaught in Gaza. But this does not delegitimise any attempt to find ways to resist the zionist entity there from within the colony here. Neither does this sober reflection prevent us from living resistance as a verb.

It is primarily the Resistance, and not us, who will free Palestine. Their steadfastness, and the resistance of Aboriginal warriors here, fills us with resolve.

Let it be assured: the entity will crumble, zionism will be defeated, and all colonies will fall.

GROUNDING

THE PORT OCCUPIES STOLEN ABORIGINAL LAND.

The course of the Birrarung has not always flowed as it does today. Different too are the lands adjoining its embankments, its bridges, its boats, its ports. The landscape along its waters has been deformed by british invasion and the continuing occupation, which began on this continent in 1788 and reached what was to become ‘victoria’ in 1834.

John Coode, agent of Empire, was commissioned in 1877 to solve the logistics problem of the ever expanding colonial outpost of ‘melbourne’. Coode’s maps plot, in great detail, the river’s alteration and proclaim the irreversible damage that was to come to the Land and Sea Country of the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung peoples. In dividing land so meticulously with his pen, Coode betrays the genteel veneer that conceals colonial violence. ‘Taming the river’, a relevant webpage of the Old Treasury Building is titled – not before displaying an acknowledgment of Country.

This arrangement, in which violence against one is peace for another, is the governing logic of the world. The fruits of modern living (the same goods that flow through the ‘port of melbourne’) are inseparable from the violence of colonialism. Since its inception, modernity has always been colonial. At an atomic level: you hold a perfectly green apple in woolworths, only for it to conceal the truth of the stolen land where it was grown, the exploited labour that picked it, the apartheid factories it was washed in. Just as “capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt”[1], the process and structure of invasion inaugurates modernity.

While Coode was showered with the gifts of empire (knighthood) and continued on his destructive path in other colonies (earlier Cape Town, later Colombo), the Birrarung is forever damaged. The original northern course of the river is no more, submerged and filled in by Swanston Dock and the industrial suburb of West Melbourne. Its acquatic life is still today besieged by routine dredging conducted by the port of melbourne authority.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MODERNITY?

By modernity, we mean the world historical formation that began with three interrelated moments in 1492: the invasion of the Americas, the Reconquista, and the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. For theorists like Aníbal Quijano and Enrique Dussell, these processes inaugurated a system of global power that reorganised labour along racialised lines. Those deemed either inferior, sub- or non-human by the twin logics of anti-Blackness and white supremacy were relegated to non-waged forms of labour, like slavery and serfdom.

This account of power centres the experience of the global invasion of Indigenous lands beginning in 1492, thereby reconfiguring the relationships between modernity, capitalism and colonialism. Rather than viewing capitalist expansion alone as a causal driver of european imperialism, capital and modernity are understood as interconnected concepts. From this, the dual term modernity/coloniality represents the necessary co-constituitive role that coloniality continues to play in all aspects of modern life, even after formal processes of decolonisation have ended.

Webb Dock, 'port of melbourne'.

SITUATING

THREE SCENES OF PALESTINE SOLIDARITY ACTION AT THE PORT

Prematurity

Wednesday 17.30pm, 8 November 2023
One month into the escalated genocide.

A coalition of Unionists for Palestine (U4P), the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), and Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) called a speakout at Webb Dock in the 'port of melbourne'. Titled 'Block the Boat', organisers had not communicated which ship would be targeted, nor how it would be blocked. By chance, during the Deputy Secretary of the MUA's speech, a truck bearing a ZIM-branded container attempted to drive past the rally. The protest split into those who moved onto the road to stop the truck, and those following the calls and interventions of organisers to 'get off the road'.

As the night progressed – and victoria police's Public Order Response Team (PORT) watched on – a string of long, drawn-out and unproductive assemblies seemed to dull the participants' energy. By 05.00am, all protesters had left Webb Dock.

8 November 2023. ZIM container at the speakout. Credit: Diego Fedele.

Impetus

Friday afternoon, 20 January 2024

Gaza Health Ministry official death toll nears 25,000.

An array of Palestine solidarity protesters established a community picket of Webb Dock. The picket was called by U4P, with the (alleged) tacit support of the MUA. Their target was the arrival of Ganges, a 52,228 gross tonnage container ship operated by the 'israeli' shipping carrier ZIM. A first attempt by PORT to clear over a hundred picketers on Friday evening was unsuccessful. By the early hours of Saturday morning, PORT officers returned and gathered on the side of the road, watching on as protesters stopped each car and turned away dock workers employed by Victoria International Container Terminal (VICT). At 06.30am, PORT attempted to clear the picket a second time. A group of protesters flanked the police line and again forced their retreat.

After a third failed PORT advance the following afternoon, the picket line remained until it was ultimately cleared by massed vicpol units on the afternoon of Monday 22 January 2024. The picket prevented work for over 53 hours, and delayed the arrival of Ganges by 76 hours. Despite unstable alliances, disagreements and divergences, the three-day January picket of Webb Dock was characterised by a prevailing impetus to move beyond symbolic action, innovate, and openly confront the state.

Possibilities foreclosed?

Friday 17.00pm, 22 March 2024

IOF besieges Al-Shifa Hospital and advances on Rafah.
Three days earlier, a Houthi missile strikes the zionist entity.

120 protesters once again established a picket to stop the worker entry into VICT. Their targets were the MSC Asya, a ship holding the most direct maritime trade route to zionist entity, and ZIM partner vessel MSC Rebecca. After the arrival of mounted police units, protesters hastily constructed barricades from nearby materials to defend the picket line. At 21.15pm, around 80 heavily armed PORT officers advanced on the picket, accompanied by four police horses and an AW139 helicopter overhead. PORT officers fired on protesters with kinetic impact pepperball rounds, 'foam baton' rounds, and stinger and flash bang grenades.

Having sustained a range of injuries and one arrest, protesters retreated from their positions behind the barricades. VICT cancelled the 12-hour shift of evening dockworkers. This action saw fewer Palestine solidarity groups represented than previous actions at the same location.

INTENTION

PRELIMINARY MATERIALS FOR AN ONGOING PROGRAM

"We write for Palestine with blood."

Ghassan Kanafani

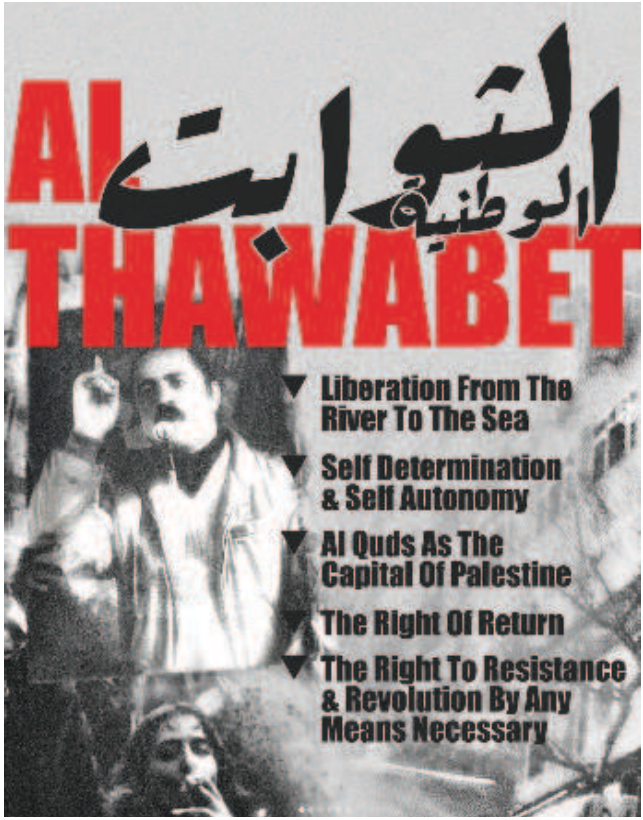
These preliminary materials endeavour to begin a collaborative program of work. Over the course of the program:

1. **We intend to narrativise the port and Palestine solidarity action in Naarm since October 7 2023.**
2. **We critically reflect on questions of strategy and choices of tactics made, considered, and implemented.**
3. **We ask, what does material solidarity from this colony to the zionist entity look like – especially now, one year into the escalation of the genocide and the accompanying intensification of organising in solidarity with Palestine in Naarm?**
4. **Finally, we ask, how can we use these learnings to prepare for the impending/already unfolding crises in 'australia' and the world?**

Adopting a sober view of the realities and trajectories of Palestine solidarity action at the port, this program invites contestation, contradiction and critical engagement – in conversations, responses and collaborative input into future writing.

This program is guided by a resolute commitment to:

1. **Centre, uphold and resist as an accomplice alongside Blak struggle for Land Back.**
2. **Uphold Al Thawabet and reject normalisation.**
3. **Resist, as a verb, as a mode of living.**


Al
الثوابت
الوطنية
THAWABET
Liberation From The River To The Sea
Self Determination & Self Autonomy
Al Quds As The Capital Of Palestine
The Right Of Return
The Right To Resistance & Revolution By Any Means Necessary

Centering Al-Thawabet, Instagram, 11 Sep 2024

https://www.instagram.com/p/C_vg_tPOOTD/

port/PORT

We use the designation port/PORT to demonstrate the inextricable connection between the docks and the police. In the analytic of modernity/coloniality, modernity is the visible terrain that is enforced by the subterranean violence of coloniality. The logistical function of the 'port of melbourne', rooted in property rights (rights in goods, containers, roads, cranes, ships – in short, the infrastructure of modernity) is only made possible by police violence (coloniality). The slash between the terms specifies their interdependent and mutually constitutive roles; neither can exist in isolation from the other.

Of course, and especially in the colony, offering a material analysis of police and property is nothing new. Neither is the role of police in enforcing the interests of capital, and specifically in using violence against labour struggles at the docks: In 1928, police shot and killed wharfie Allan Whittaker after firing on striking dockworkers at Princes Pier, barely a kilometer away from Webb Dock.

Our intervention draws attention to the unique context of Palestine solidarity action at the port in Naarm and its trajectories since the intensification of the genocide on 7 October 2023. The port is our analytical locus, a juncture straddling two much broader histories: labour struggle at the docks, and solidarity with Palestine – across Naarm, the continent, and the world.

We continually rearticulate that the (often exceptionalised) spectacle of police violence against protestors is nothing other than the everyday violence of a continuing, 235-year occupation. The use of militarised police weaponry betrays the actuality of power relations in the colony. Any violence that we have experienced in the past year is merely a glimpse of the violence that the state continues to inflict on Blak and Brown communities. In the colony, the alleged exception of police violence is the norm – through history to the present.

Solidarity with the Palestinian resistance *there* necessitates fighting for the abolition of the colony *here*. To provincialise solidarity to one particular struggle for liberation is to ignore the ubiquity of modernity/coloniality.

PORT forming a line to (unsuccessfully) clear around 100 protesters in front of VICT, 21 February 2024. This action disrupted the Wednesday evening shift change at VICT, halting work on the ZIM Sparrow after the entire 12-hour shift was cancelled. Credit: Matt Hrkac.

Since 7 October 2023, port/PORT presents us a frame, localised in space and time, through which to understand the linkages from *here to there*, *from then until now*, and *what is to come*.

We believe theory comes from life. Just as modernity/coloniality and port/PORT are inseparable, so too are theory and praxis. Against the academic sanitisation of theory, we affirm messiness, complexity, thoughts not fully fleshed out – this writing as a case in point.

We never want to be 'finished': "what you listen to or what you're reading is still moving and still living. It's still forming".[2] One year into the escalated genocide, for us to theorise is to sharpen our tools, to recalibrate our sights, and prepare for what is to come.

"THIS IS ~~NOT~~ A POLICE STATE."

"In a country whose population is constituted and dispersed, like that of New South Wales, the due security of life and property cannot be adequately provided for by any system which does not involve a very considerable expense."
– Article on 'Police in Australia', *The Australasian Chronicle*, 15 November 1839

MAKING THE COLONY

The history of policing in 'australia' is nothing other than the history of genocide. From the privatised killing of First Nations peoples to armoured PORT units, a direct line connects the frontier wars to the police today. Stemming from early colonial army regiments, modern policing was created to enforce colonisation, fundamentally by protecting property.

Within the 'australian' context, earlier informal (i.e. not state-controlled) policing was often conducted by settlers who themselves had participated in massacres. These units made no attempt to disguise the genocidal-paramilitary organisation that they were. The settler thirst for territory led to the formation of the Port Phillip Association in 1835, following reports of the invasion of Gunditjmara Country earlier at portland by the Hentys.

Earlier failed attempts at colonisation in sorrento (1803) and western port (1826) spurred the Association to invade Kulin lands at what was to become the site of 'melbourne'. This group of bankers, jurists, merchants, politicians and farmers together cemented those specific genocidal foundations of what was to become the colony of 'victoria'.

The first policing efforts were conducted by settlers; their primary task was to massacre Aboriginal people under the euphemism of 'dispersal'. Only 16% of known massacres in Victoria were conducted by agents of the state. The rest comprised a decentralised (but no less genocidal) campaign to break the staunch resistance efforts of Blak warriors.

Despite superficial attempts to treaty with the Wurundjeri people, land grabs and occupation continued unabated. Policing provided the protection necessary to defend the system of squatting and pastoral leases against the insurgency of Aboriginal guerillas. Modernity could only prosper in Victoria when undergirded by this colonial regime.

Unlike 'new south wales', 'victoria' was a "free" colony without convict labour. Military patrols could therefore focus solely on enforcing the occupation. The institutions of the water police, native police, mounted police, goldfields police and border police formally coalesced into vicpol in the Police Regulation Act 1853. Vicpol today (and PORT) trace their history to this legislation.

WITHOUT THIS HISTORY, THE 'PORT OF MELBOURNE' IS IMPOSSIBLE.

The expanding colonial desecration of Land and Sea Country precedes today's port of melbourne authority. South Wharf, Victoria Dock, Station Pier, Swanston Dock, Webb Dock, Appleton Dock, and Holden Dock constitute a living archive of the physical destruction of Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Country.

Underneath the concrete metropolis still lies Aboriginal Country: as Gamilaroi/ Wiradjuri artist Michael Riley declares in his visual essay, Empire (1997), a latent Aboriginal spirituality persists in Country, no matter how much the colonisers destroy and deform it.

8 June 2024, @moley.peanut

ROUTINES OF MODERNITY

'Historical' structures of domination persist despite their apparent evolution into benign systems under the guise of the status quo. What may appear to be a bloodless procession in the circulation of capital – the routine operation of trucks, straddles, cranes – disguises within it the ruthless violence of colonisation. If we accept that invasion is a structure, not an event, then it is clear that this structure embeds itself into every blood-soaked fibre of the colonial fabric of our lives. Yet just as the commodity effaces its own history, so too does modernity. The cranes of progress towering above the port serve as a monument to the continuing occupation.

The series of actions at the docks in solidarity with Palestine since 7 October 2023 has exposed the interrelationship of modernity/coloniality. These moments turn the abstract into something concrete: the economic linkages between this colony and the zionist entity, which fuel the violence of both; the possibility that a group of people can disrupt this 'benign' routine; and the predictably violent response of PORT to restore order to the flow of capital.

Police are only the most visible tip of an entire order of politicians, capitalists, jurists, bureaucrats and settlers that benefit the most from the ongoing occupation of Aboriginal Land. The struggle between the strategies of the protestors and that of the police has formed a dialectical motion that propels each to mobilise in unique ways to respond to the other. Presently, we are at a strategic aporia – one that we are not ready to declare over. Just as few could predict the great breakout of Palestinian resistance on the eve of Operation Al Aqsa Flood, it would be unwise to eulogise any site of struggle.

14 activists scaled two cranes at VICT on 30 April 2024, halting work for around six hours..

And while police violence appears as an abberation to many who still believe in the tenets of modernity (democracy, rights, freedom), we understand it is merely the temporary mobilisation of techniques of power which daily are applied to First Nations people on this continent: this is just another day in the colony.

The police response to the riots of Brewarrina (1987), Palm Island (2004), Redfern (2004) or Dubbo (2005–2006) clearly differ from how PORT has engaged with protestors at the docks over the last year. The examples of Aboriginal resistance against the colony, typically occuring after state-sanctioned murders in their community, are met with a categorically different state repression. While action at the docks presents a logistical challenge for the police, Aboriginal insurrection presents an existential threat to the very heart of the colony itself.

Taking just the example of Dubbo (2005–2006), the Gordon Estate 'riot' (an act of community defence) occured in the aftermath of police officers bashing a 16 year old. The incident, occuring on New Years Eve, saw a police patrol car burnt and officers pelted with projectiles – one being hospitalised with a broken jaw. Following this humiliation of the colonial order, the systematic destruction of the estate was ordered by bureaucrats and social policy engineers, whose 'vision' amounted to nothing short of ethnic cleansing in the 21st century. Language at the time referred to the 'dispersal' of some 1300 predominantly Aboriginal residents, whose homes were bulldozed and land seized by settlers. This endeavour was widely praised, credited with creating a property boom in West Dubbo and a possible ongoing solution to the affordable housing crisis. Replicated in Redfern and Campbeltown, colonial violence against First Nations communities once again proved lucrative for the expansion of modernity. From massacres and land grabs to the bulldozing of the Gordon Estate, it is clear that as it was before, so it is now.

Burnt out police car on the Gordon Estate, 1 January 2006.

The ethnic cleansing of the Gordon Estate is one among many examples littered throughout the colonial archive. They demonstrate time and time again that 'australia' is precisely a police state – from its penal orgins to its allegedly peaceful present.

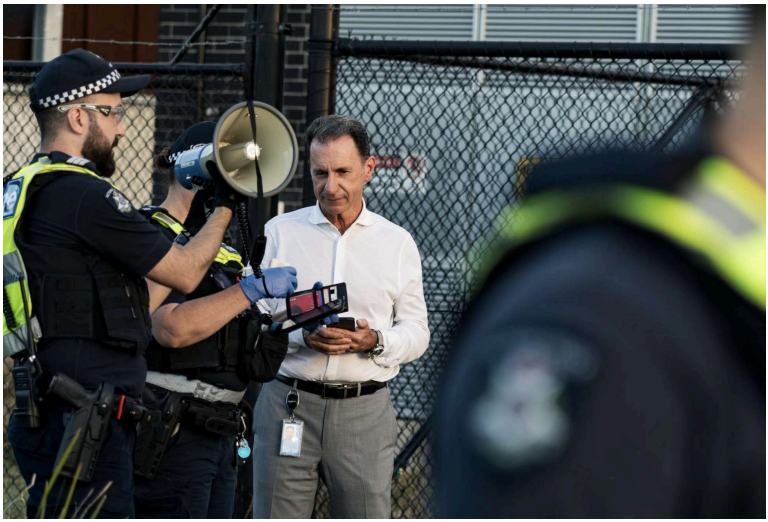
"It's not only us as a company [VICT] that is losing; it's the australian economy."

– VICT CEO, Bruno Porchietto (7News, 20 January 2024)

As a chokepoint in the circulation of capital, the docks materialise the intangible processes that fuel modernity/coloniality. Crucially, this means that their disruption is equally visible: the stopping of cranes, straddles, and trucks, a shipping yard emptied of productive labour. 100 bodies can block the two roads leading into Webb Dock – at least for a few hours.

Material disruption of the port therefore renders action legible to protesters. Despite the impossibility that stopping the shift changes of a few dozen dockworkers will disrupt the genocide, 'being able to see one's own actions alongside the actions of others, and being able to see as well the effects of such concerted action, imbues those actions with a meaning they might have otherwise lacked.'[3]

The CEO of VICT, above, crystallised how dependent the colony's economy is on the infrastructure of the port. We would hasten to add that those economies that trade with this colony lose too – including the zionist entity.



VICT CEO, Bruno Porchietto, liaises with police to issue a legal warning to gathered protesters to leave. 21 February 2024. Credit: Matt Hrkac.

PORT officers in front of VICT after their assault on protesters on Webb Dock Drive, 22 March 2024. Around 100 protesters disrupted VICT, delaying the MSC Asya and MSC Rebecca after the 12-hour shift was cancelled. Credit: Jay Kogler.

The port is the gateway to the world: if we are to do global solidarity, this is an inevitable locus of action. Trade between 'australia' and the zionist entity is valued at $1.4 billion per annum. Infrastructures of logistics tie together the economic interests of colonies across the world.

Port actions subvert Coode's act of colonial violence, seeking to unsettle the (stolen) terrain on which modernity/coloniality is built. So too does the ship loom large in australian history – need we remember the ghostly sails that appeared on the horizon in 1788. They brought with them not only disease, destruction, massacre, and genocide, but also the core of 'modernity'. The 'port of melbourne' contains in its materiality a kernel of the global struvcture of modernity/coloniality.

Dare we say, we are all counterlogisticians now.

BEGINNINGS OF A PROGRAM

The question is clear: where to from here?

In one way or another, the movement so far has oriented around an additional question: 'what does material solidarity from here to Palestine look like?'

The lessons of the past year of action are apparent. Yet more can be gleaned through a project of intentional analysis.

This initial publication, as a prelude to a collaborative, open-ended series, intends to point to some challenges and dynamics contained within the Palestine solidarity movement in Naarm since 7 October 2023. We invite all people to collaborate, for example, by sending us any insights, reflections, questions or disagreements provoked by this zine, or producing your own materials or sketches and sharing them with us.

Possible topics for interrogation could include:

- The genealogy of struggles at the dock
- Workers, settlers, and unions
- Logistics, infrastructure and capital
- Social media and its political utility
- Respectability politics
- NGOs and counterinsurgent tendencies
- Law, lore and legal institutions

We conclude with the words of Edward Said:

> *In the Prison Notebooks Gramsci says:*
>
> > *'The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date, which has* ***deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory****.'*
>
> *The only available English translation inexplicably leaves Gramsci's comment at that, whereas in fact Gramsci's Italian text concludes by adding, '****therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.****'*
>
> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978) p 25.

START HERE

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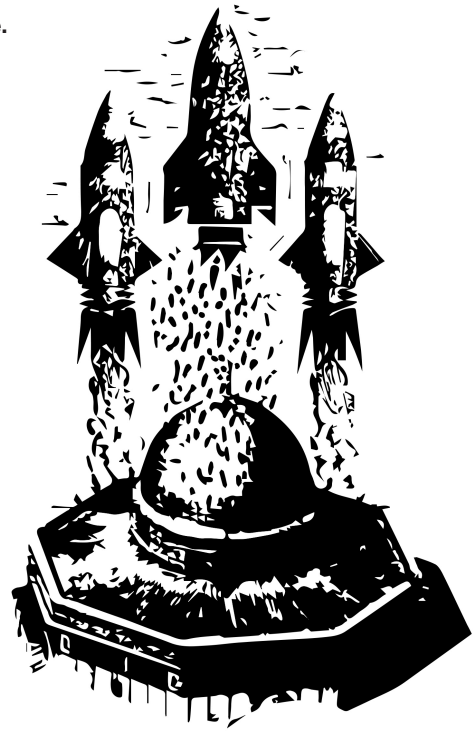
Endnotes

1 Karl Marx, *Capital Vol 1* (1867), ch 31

2 Fred Moten, Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (2013) p. 103

3 Jasper Bernes, *Endnotes 3,* 'Logistics, Counterlogistics and the Communist Prospect' (2013), p 188

Glory to the martyrs.
Freedom for the prisoners.
Healing to the wounded.
Disgrace on the traitors.
Victory to the resistance.



“I will remain steadfast on my land, until the last blood-drop in my soul, until my last breath, until I lose my breath, getting suffocated and die. Then I will be buried in my land, buried under the houseplants. I want to be planted in my land.”

Words of a child from Gaza, December 2023.